

MINUTES OF OU STUDENTS ASSOCIATION BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2020

A Record of the Proceedings

Conference Business

The Business element of Conference took place online in the fortnight proceeding Conference weekend. All documents were published online on June 12 when voting opened. Questions were invited to a dedicated forum up until 5pm on June 23. Voting closed at midday on June 24. Casting a vote in Conference Business was a pre-requisite for attendance at the weekend programme.

Conference 2020 Business Resolutions: results of the voting.

Number of registered Conference delegates (eligible voters)	429
Number of votes cast	347
Spoilt votes	0
Turnout required for quorum @40%	172
Voter turnout	80.89%

Results are as follows, as verified and validated by our external voting provider Civica Election Services:

1. Minutes of Conference 2018

Approve	331
Abstain	16

2. Report of the Board of Trustees

Approve	334
Not Approve	4
Abstain	9

3. Reports of the Central Executive Committee

Approve	342
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Not Approve	2
Abstain	3

4. Accounts

Approve	334
Not Approve	4
Abstain	9

5. Re-appointment of the Auditors

Approve	333
Not Approve	4
Abstain	10

6. Affiliations

Approve	340
Not Approve	0
Abstain	7

7. Bye-Laws

Approve	331
Not Approve	6
Abstain	10

In respect of the above results, all resolutions have met the quorum required and have been duly approved by Conference delegates.

Conference 2020, held over the weekend of 24 – 26 June, which in the wake of the pandemic was staged completely online for the first time in its history. Following national lockdown in late March, and after much deliberation by student representatives, trustees and staff members, the event was given the go ahead to proceed as planned but to take place in an all online arena. This meant the abandoning of several months of preparation and the immediate shift of focus to transferring and altering arrangements to suit an online platform. It was no mean feat that in less than 12 weeks, sterling efforts by the Conference Steering Committee in conjunction with the staff team under the capable coordination of Amy Undrell, saw the successful delivery of the Student Association Conference 2020.

Conference Programme

Friday 26th June

Networking Opportunities for Regions, Nations, Faculties and HLMS

Online Expo – including OU Library, Careers, Open Programme.

Trusting Statistics in today's news. The Stats Team, Open University.

Virtual Bar

Friday Film Night

Saturday 27th June

9.00 – Welcome from the President, Cath Brown.

9.30 – Coffee and Student Consultation on Flexible Study.

11.00 – Guest Speaker, Emma Hardy MP.

11.30 – Guest Speaker, Michael Irwin

12.00 - Coffee and Consultation on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

1.00 – Guest Speaker, Sabrina Cohen-Hatton

1.30 – Vice Chancellor, Tim Blackman's Question Time.

2.00 – Coffee and Consultation on online experience.

2.00 - Meet the Societies

3.00 – In conversation with Kirsty Williams, Education Minister Wales.

3.00 - Write Club Readings

4.00 - Audience with Professor Brian Cox

5.00 - University Challenge

6.00 – In conversation with Clare Adamson, MSP.

6.00 - Cook along

6.30 – 8.00 Networking, Fancy Dress Prize Draw, Quiz and social

Sunday 28th June

9.00 - Welcome Back including results of business

9.30 - Myth busting with the Central Executive Committee – who we are and what we do.

10.00 – Guest Speaker, Hayley Mulenda

11.00 - Psychology Society, Presentation by Fred Toates

11.30 – Literature Panel

12pm – Guest Speaker, Monica Grady

1pm – Closing Session. Celebrating outgoing CEC members and welcoming the newly elected team.

Presentation of Honorary Life Membership

The Students Association presents Honorary Life Membership to those students who have played an active role in the organisation and who have gone over and above what is expected to represent and support fellow students.

Cherry Day – outgoing Vice President Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Cherry has given so much over a number of years to support students, staff, volunteers, the Association and the Open University. She has always put the needs of those she represents above her own and has been a positive role model to many. She has been a champion in defending and promoting the rights of people with disabilities and other groups for students with protected characteristics. The way she cares for other students and what happens to them is something to aspire to – she is always there for others. The enthusiasm with which Cherry has approached her role and her dedication are outstanding, and she will fight tooth and nail for what she believes in.

We all know Cherry as a warm and welcoming person, full of life experience, easy to talk to, non-judgemental and always kind. As well as excellent company, she's also a great person to share a laugh with. She's always been willing to help her fellow student representatives, take them under her wing and be there for them in times of their personal need. She has been a great source of advice and has an immense knowledge of the Association, which she has always been happy to share.

Cherry accepted her honour earlier this year and we are pleased that this means she will have to stay in touch.

Steph Stubbins also accepted her honour quite recently.

Steph was elected to the Executive Committee as Vice President Community in 2016, went on to be elected as Deputy President in 2018, and in those roles worked tirelessly to advance the interests of OU students. She has been an inspirational member of the team; has shown an infectious enthusiasm for any task she has approached, with an overwhelming sense of positivity and pride in the work that she does on behalf of the Association. She has been an immense support to many past and current volunteers and has always championed the student voice. She's been extremely well liked by students, Association staff members and OU staff alike. She's always had a smile and a good word for anyone who wants to discuss the OU and the Association and has been a real credit to us in whatever task she undertook on our behalf. Steph has been a huge voice for students especially disabled students and always went the extra mile to get that voice heard.

Steph has been responsible for bringing many new faces into volunteering for the Students Association, her passion and energy and infectious enthusiasm, inspiring many fellow students to get involved. She made a huge impact in a short space of time and although her term of office as Deputy President was cut short by ill health, late last year, her achievements and her commitment to enhancing the experience of all our students is held in high regard by us all.

We are agreed that the Students Association gained a wonderful volunteer when Steph got involved and when she accepted her honorary life membership – we were pleased to understand that we will always have her support.

Nicki Hadjpanteli

Nicki has been travelling from her home in Greece to Milton Keynes for over 10 years to take part in student representation across a number of OU Committees, as a Representative for the Faculty of Business and Law on our Executive Committee and as part of the reference Group that advises our student Senate members.

Nicki is very popular amongst her student and staff colleagues, known particularly for her quiet and considered input to meetings and her thoughtful contributions to discussions. She is passionate about the Students Association, committed in the roles that she's played and is never afraid to be the one to ask the questions and always makes a valuable input to a debate.

Her considerable experience and knowledge built up over these years, has meant that she has helped train and support many new representatives while they are finding their feet. She is generous in her sharing of knowledge both of education matters – but also about how the University's Committee system operates. She is meticulous in her reading of papers, raising questions about anything that she feels is detrimental to OU students and is a passionate advocate for students outside of the UK.

She ensures that other student reps feel included and empowered. Fellow reps agree that she plays a central role in bringing students together to consider the issues before a meeting ensuring that the team is well prepared and can make an effective contribution, acting together for the best outcome for students.

Nicki is known for her kindness and friendliness and her reputation as a dedicated and selfless student Rep is appreciated by everyone who comes into contact with her. She has been described as gentle natured but formidable - a deadly combination. A fellow Rep noted that 'without Nicki by our side – we would never have achieved half of what we did'.

Others have commented that Nicki is the very model of what a student representative should be – and we all agree that this honour is richly deserved.

Derek Naysmith

Derek is a much valued and highly respected student representative – a thought shared by everyone who has had the pleasure and privilege of working with him.

He has been a Faculty Rep in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, a further member of our Senate Reference Group and has served on many other OU Committees, too numerous to name here, for over ten years.

Derek's home is in Scotland but he regularly travels to Milton Keynes usually with his faithful guide dog by his side – and we know that this travel is challenging and rarely straight forward but he always arrives ready and prepared to contribute wholeheartedly in all meetings and discussions.

Newly appointed student representatives are especially happy to work with Derek. He ensures that newcomers to our student representation work are well supported, kept informed and up to date and helped to understand the issues and guided through often long and complex paperwork. Derek has supported and trained new Reps in this way over a number of years, going out of his way to help others as a matter of course, right from when they are first in role.

Derek's contributions to meetings are always student-focused, thoughtful, well-argued and well-presented and he is listened to with respect by everyone right up to the most senior members of the University. He adds a vital and fresh perspective to the discussions and has provided invaluable input both to the Students Association and the Open University in a number of assisted learning projects. He is also highly regarded by staff in the Quality Office for his work as a PQR reviewer.

Derek has shown exemplary dedication and commitment to his voluntary role across different committees over the years and his support for the OU Students Association. He is a wonderful student rep and fully deserving of this award.

Nigel Patterson

Nigel has been a valued and valuable Student Representative for the Association over many years. In his 'first life' with the Open University (back some years ago) he was an active member of the Student Association's Executive Committee and was the student responsible for proposing Named Degrees.

In his 'second incarnation' that is in recent years, Nigel has been a passionate student representative in the STEM faculty and another valued member of our Senate Reference Group. He has also been an active member in student Societies and a 'great force for good' particularly in Fusion (the Physics society) and M500 (that's Maths). He's also on the eSTEEeM Student

Reference Panel and makes a great contribution there. This underlines the great passion he has for his Faculty and we know that he makes every effort to promote it whenever he can.

Nigel is a dedicated student representative, an ardent supporter of the Students Association and is always willing to share his knowledge with other members of the rep team. He has been a longstanding help to new student reps being that visible and knowledgeable source of support and information that has helped many newcomers develop into their roles. He shows a true student-centred approach in his work as a rep, always making sure that things that are being done are for the benefit of the students and always speaking out for their best interests.

Nigel is a very principled man who cares deeply about the university, its students, education in general, and the principle of openness. He cares deeply about student community. He is never afraid to take on a challenge and speak out for what he believes in. Fellow reps report that 'he is one of those relatively rare people you can have quite an intense argument with, but with no falling out or bad feeling involved.'

He is truly a life-long learner and a keen advocate of OU policies that understand and support students. In addition to his formal roles, Nigel is always happy to contribute to events, workshops, focus groups etc and has dedicated so much time and effort to the Students Association and thereby its members.

Nigel is nothing if not committed to the cause, he goes above and beyond with the interests of students as his driving focus.

We feel that this honour will recognise his long and tireless commitment.

Cath Brown

I'll just use the name Cath. She only needs one name of introduction and there cannot be many departments across the Open University who are not aware of our Cath.

You'll have seen Cath throughout the last few days from when she welcomed you all to the weekend, introduced many of our guests and speakers, fielded student questions, been part of student consultations, performed a Jeremy Paxman in the University Challenge, socialised with the rest of us in the many student hubs and gatherings and still managed to be here to lead the closing session of Conference.

You'll possibly know by now that Cath is our departing President and the levels of energy and input that you have witnessed this weekend have been the same as her level of commitment and dedication that the OU Students Association has enjoyed for these past 2 years.

Cath began her Student Association career as a member of our University Challenge Team, she initiated and helped to run Fusion our Physics Society, took on Chair of the Society Committee that provides help and support to all of our student societies; then she worked as a Faculty Rep in STEM, developing that role into a blue print for the sort of contribution that our representatives can make in their Faculty before being elected to the role of Association President.

As President, Cath's leadership of the Students Association has been outstanding. She has worked tirelessly to support students both individually and collectively. She is a passionate advocate for student engagement and has used her extensive knowledge of the OU to ensure that the student voice is heard far and wide throughout the University. In any crisis – everyone should have a Cath! Never one to shy away from a challenge, she has fought unceasingly to obtain the

best outcomes for students during the current pandemic, being a formidable character when holding the University to account.

She's been very active throughout her term in representing OU students in the wider world too, with her excellent Wonkhe articles and speeches at conferences, contributions to all party parliamentary committees and other key events.

Those often-listed qualities of an OU student - hard work, dedication, commitment, motivation - Cath has in bucket loads and from all of which the Students Association has benefited over this time. She has been a visible, available and supportive presence to fellow students, always willing to help those who need encouragement or information, generously sharing her knowledge and wisdom, providing the value of her experience to students across the piece in the many forums and platforms where they gather.

Her love for the OU shines through, and her immense pride at being an OU student is clear to see. Most of all, her dedication to the Students Association and everything she has done for OU students puts her right up with some of the best Presidents that the OU Students Association have been fortunate enough to have.

That's why we are immensely happy and proud to award Cath with Honorary Life Membership of our Association.